

Competition produces the 'guerilla independents' at Sundance

By TROY CULLISON
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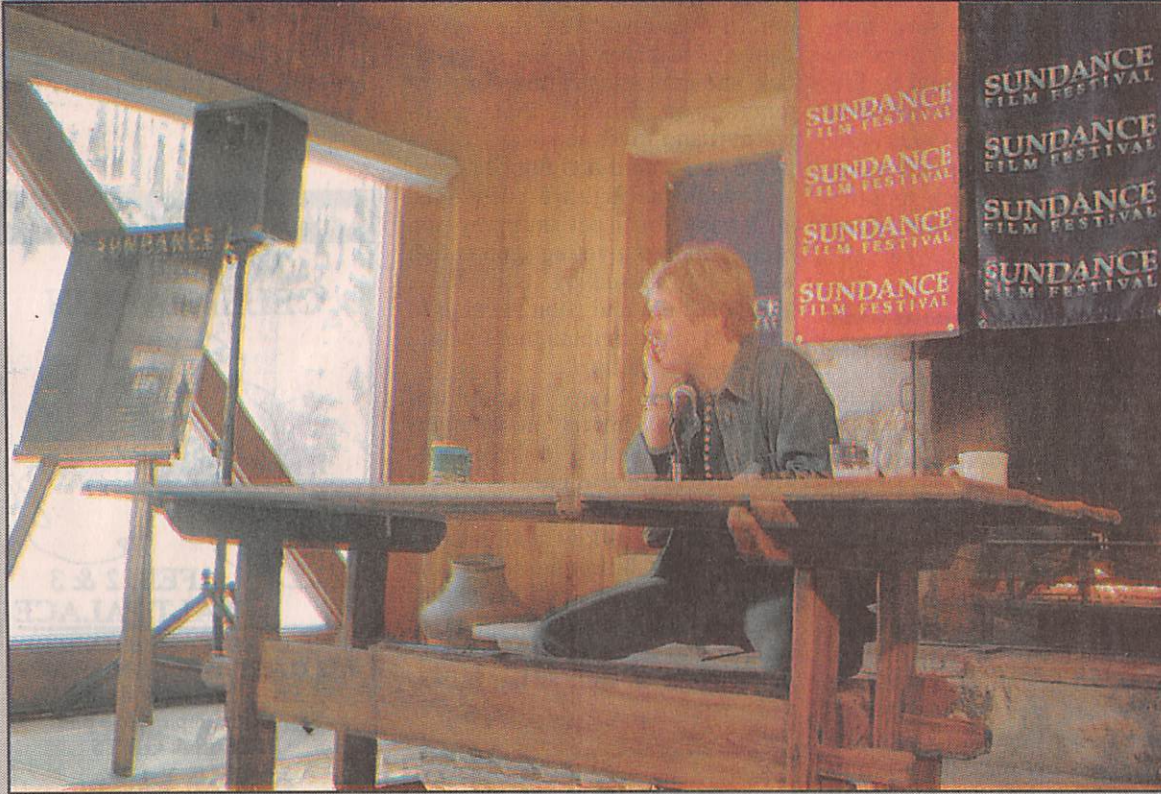
The Sundance Film Festival is the premiere exhibition place within the U.S. for independent filmmakers. Yet, like most arenas these days, even Sundance hasn't the resources to accommodate all of the filmmakers that it hopes to promote.

This year's body of competitive works included eighteen dramatic entries and sixteen documentary selections. Add to this twenty dramatic and documentary works appearing in a non-competitive status, and that brings this aspect of the festival lineup to a total of fifty-four films. That number is culled from nearly 700 submissions.

With approximately one in 13 films making it into the program, it is understandable that many independent filmmakers are feeling frustrated.

Independents are accustomed to bucking the system and enduring the outsider status that they hold in the eyes of the major studios. Theoretically, it is the restrictions inherent in the Hollywood system that led most of them to their independent status in the first place. But to be unable to display their works in the independent arena as well has to be doubly frustrating.

This frustration has led to the emergence of a fringe element around the festival which might be labeled the "Guerilla Independent." Unable to show



Robert Redford, founder of the Sundance Film Festival, pauses to look out the window during a press conference on Jan. 20 at Sundance. The fierce competition between independent film-

makers to get into the festival has resulted in an upspringing of independent filmmakers who show their films in hotel rooms and other non-festival locations.

officially within the auspices of the festival, many filmmakers are staging their own events; hoping to draw off of the pool of viewers and executives in attendance at the festival proper.

The degree of guerilla activity ranges from full-blown alternate festivals running concurrent with the Sundance festival, to

private screenings of individual projects in local hotel rooms.

One such hopeful individual is Garry Dinnerman, a 29-year old Atlanta filmmaker who took matters into his own hands when his 24-minute production, *Outside Looking In* was not accepted for the festival.

Garry describes his film as a

humorous and ironic view of the film festival movie business. The story is largely based upon his own experiences at last year's Sundance festival. Already writer, producer and director, Dinnerman now constitutes the marketing department as well as he works to get the film exposure.

His efforts include faxes and follow-up letters announcing his presence to various agents, members of the industry, and press; renting a \$200-a night hotel room on Main Street in Park City where he shows his film throughout the day; and projecting slides at night from his hotel room onto the building across the street to direct people to his location.

Such determination is nothing new for the seriously dyslexic young man who turned to video to complete his book reports in school. Not sure what to expect, he only knew he wasn't willing to sit at home simply because he didn't appear on the program. Within the first three days of the festival, Garry said he had shown his film to about twenty people — far less than a single screening within the competition affords, but he remained optimistic: "So far, so good. I'm not behind bars yet."

At the other end of the spectrum is the emergence of the Slamdance International Film Festival and Market, which is celebrating its second year. With its own public relations firm in Southern California, the Slamdance festival, not coincidentally, runs six days in Park City between the open and close of the Sundance festival.

The Slamdance festival was hastily organized in 1995 by three frustrated filmmakers, Jon (See GUERILLA, Page D6)

UTAH COUNTY

Sundance is denied a 5th liquor license

Panel fears for public safety. Expansion plans will suffer, resort says.

By Jeff Vice 3-29-96

Deseret News staff writer

PROVO — Giving their consent for four liquor licenses at Sundance made county partners uneasy, but the application was denied by the administration. The board of directors of Sundance said they were not sure if the application was denied because of the state law and a new county ordinance.

tions at the Tree Room and Bearclaw's Cabin restaurant, the general store and the beer license application for the entire ski resort. But they stopped short of consenting to a full liquor license. The Creekside Cafe apply for a liquor license from the state Liquor Commission, due to state law and a new county ordinance.

Sundance officials applied for a

full license for Creekside again this week, saying that they intend to expand the cafe into a banquet and conference center. That and conference convince commission that we consent.

We would like to make Sundance an internationally recognized conference center," Mike Washburn said. "But as part of that we've got to be able to take care of our guests."

Commissioner David Gardner, though, said if the cafe is expanded, Sundance officials would

probably have to have a commission. Grover renewed their objections to giving consent on the grounds that there would be so many liquor outlets located at one resort.

"To have four full liquor licenses within a relatively confined space creates a possible public safety hazard," Gardner said. "And I'm not sure that we wouldn't be setting ourselves up for a liability issue as well."

Commissioner Gary Herbert moved that the commission grant

prior commissions had given their consent in 1983 and 1993 and he could not remember any drunken driving or skiing accidents happening in Provo Canyon because Sundance had full liquor licenses.

Herbert's motion, however, died without a second.

Because commissioners gave their consent for a beer license to the whole resort, however, the Creekside Cafe will be able to sell beer to customers. But county law prohibits liquor sales on Sundays in stores and restaurants that have beer licenses only.

GUERRILLA:

(Continued from Page D5)

Fitzgerald, Shane Kuhn and Peter Baxter, after their debut films failed to make the cut for the Sundance competition. Within three weeks the founders had raised money, rented screening spaces and solicited additional entries. The makeshift festival featured twelve films, and garnered enough attention to warrant a return.

This year's selection included over fifty films, including competition entries, shorts, foreign films and premieres. Primarily devoted to first time directors and features, festival personnel were quick to point out the inclusion of *The Daytrippers*, a film produced by Steven Soderbergh and Nancy Tenenbaum. Ironically, it was at Sundance where Soderbergh first came to prominence with his festival favorite *Sex, Lies, and Videotape*.

While Creative Director Peter

Baxter acknowledges some negative feedback from the Sundance Festival, he doesn't believe there is any real conflict between the two events. Given the wealth of submissions attributed to Sundance, along with the 450 hopefuls that Slamdance received, he feels one more venue for exhibition of independent work is justification enough for their presence.

Whether or not the Slamdance festival can continue to financially sustain itself remains to be seen, but as crowds of disappointed film-goers abandon lengthy Sundance waitlist lines in favor of less publicized, but accessible alternatives, the public demand seems to support them.



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